

G-IV-B-133

ca. 1900

Austin Tasker House

Private

Deer Park

The Austin Tasker House is a one and one-half story, gable-roofed dwelling with a three-bay, center-door facade. The house rests on a poured concrete foundation and is covered by asphalt roll siding.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

G-IV-B-133
MAGI #1209105704
ML

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Austin Tasker House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Deer Park Hotel Road, W. Side, approx. .9 mi. S. of the Deer Park Hotel complex

CITY, TOWN

Deer Park

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6th

☒ VICINITY OF

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Garrett County

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

☐ STRUCTURE

☐ SITE

☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS

☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

☐ UNOCCUPIED

☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED

☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED

☒ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE

☐ COMMERCIAL

☐ EDUCATIONAL

☐ ENTERTAINMENT

☐ GOVERNMENT

☐ INDUSTRIAL

☐ MILITARY

☐ MUSEUM

☐ PARK

☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

☐ RELIGIOUS

☐ SCIENTIFIC

☐ TRANSPORTATION

☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Harold R. Landis et al

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

☐ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Garrett County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Third and Alder Streets

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

STATE

Maryland 21550

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION**CONDITION**

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Austin Tasker House is located on the west side of Deer Park Hotel Road, about one mile south of the Deer Park Hotel area. The house is placed near the road and is backed by trees.

The house is a one and one-half story gable-roofed dwelling with a three-bay, center-door facade. The facade points southeast and is covered by a one-story, shed-roofed porch. The northwest elevation is covered by a one-story, shed-roofed addition.

The house rests on a poured concrete foundation and is covered by asphalt roll siding. The windows are two over two and four over four sash and have plain board surrounds. The roof is covered with tar paper.

The house has no visible chimneys. The facade porch roof is covered with tar paper which is supported by square posts. The interior arrangement of the house is unknown.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	ca. 1900	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	unknown
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house is an example of a common western Maryland type. Houses of this general configuration, a rectangular main block measuring three bays across the facade, were constructed in Garrett County from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries.

The previous occupant, Austin Tasker, was the unfortunate subject of an article in the Washington Post of January 9, 1981, after he died of cold in this house.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ann Burns, Historic Sites Surveyor
Maryland Historical Trust/Bureau of Mines

DATE

1981

STREET & NUMBER

Shaw House, 21 State Circle

TELEPHONE

(301) 269-2438

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis

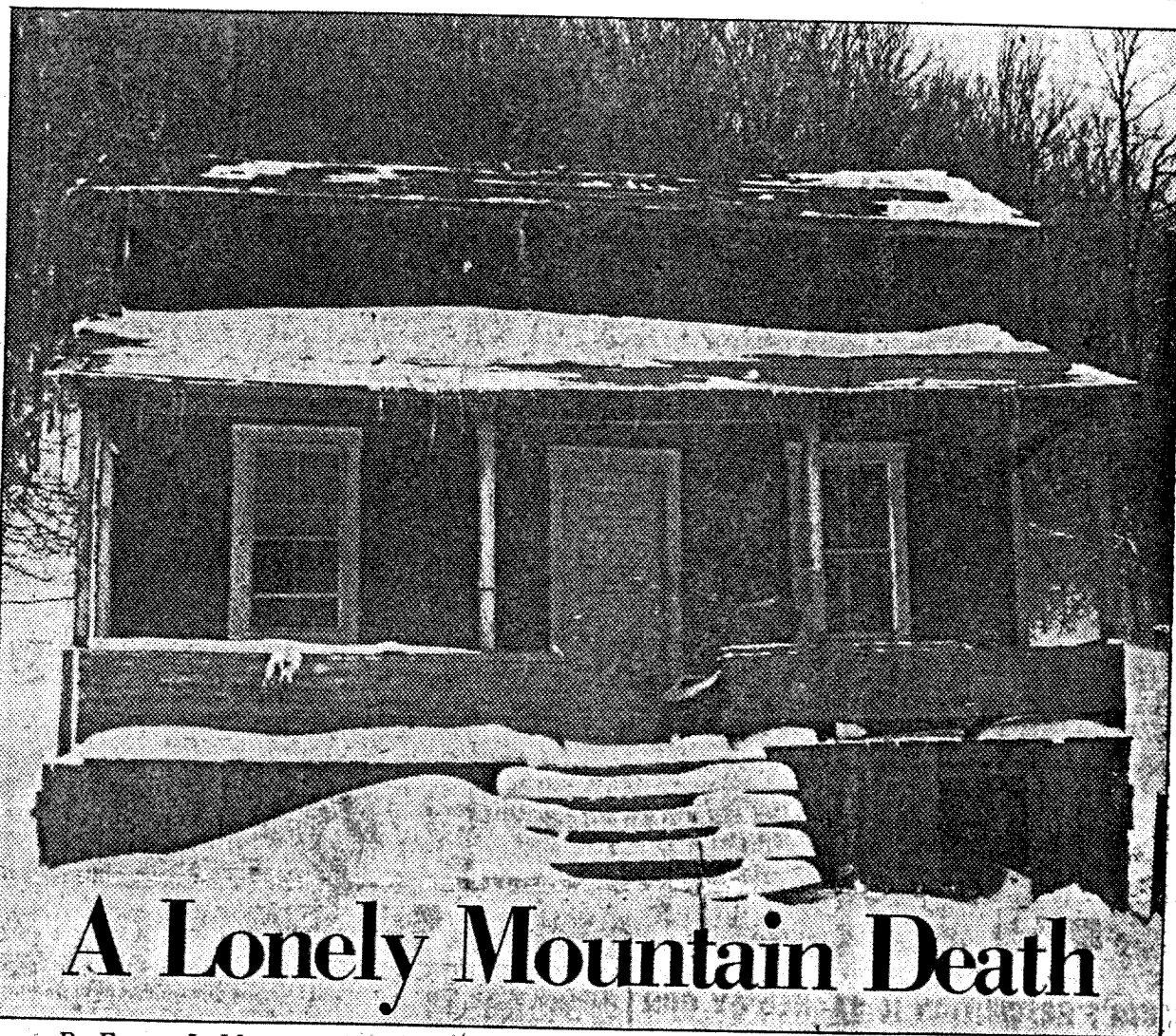
STATE

Maryland 21401

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438



A Lonely Mountain Death

By Eugene L. Meyer
Washington Post Staff Writer

DEER PARK, Md., Jan. 8 — In the mountains of far western Maryland, winter is a time of extremes. The people prepare for it and live with it, but sometimes, because of carelessness or bad luck, they die from it.

Last weekend, when temperatures dropped to 10 below and the winds whipped over the snowscape, Austin Urban Tasker froze to death in his drafty ramshackle house, a half-empty bottle of whisky tucked between his legs and a tub of unused coal sitting behind his stove.

The 70-year-old former miner, farmer, moonshiner and drifter is believed to be Maryland's first weather fatality this year. He died in Garrett County, the coldest, highest and least densely populated area in the state, a starkly beautiful county that right now resembles a Currier and Ives print with four-wheel-



Associated Press photos
Austin Tasker, shown in undated photo, died in his house in Garrett County.

drive jeeps and snowmobiles in place of horses and carriages.

The bucolic scene, however, is deceptive. Survival in the country is not always easy.

"Yes, sir, she's a rough life out here," said Paul Sharpless, 28, a friend of Tasker who found his lifeless body Sunday night next to the coal stove whose fires had burned out, a pot of frozen water on top.

Today, the day after several inches of fresh snow fell and wind gusts of up to 25 miles an hour caused drifts to pile up, "Audie" Tasker's few friends and relatives who still cared pondered his life and mourned his death.

He had five children he hadn't seen in years and four sisters he saw only rarely, but four drinking companions did their best to care for him. An Army veteran, he had wanted interment at Arlington National Cemetery. Instead, he was buried in a plain, cloth-covered wooden casket — "not a welfare casket, by any means," the funeral director said, but far from a top of the line.

A Lonely Mountain Death

WINTER, From B1

The mourners wanted to believe that the cause of death was a heart attack. The medical examiner's verdict — death by hypothermia, where the body temperature drops so low a person cannot live — was harder to accept.

"Freezing to death," said Paul Sharpless. "That's the bad part about it."

The alcohol, which makes a person feel deceptively warm and comfortable, had numbed his mind as well as his body. The biggest mystery, however, was not the cause of death but what had become of the more than \$200 in bills, from freshly cashed government checks, he had with him on Saturday.

The rented red-shingled house on Old Hotel Road offered no clues. It was, as usual, a shambles, with empty whisky and beer bottles scattered about and dishes piled high in the sink.

His eyeglasses were on the floor of the front room where he mostly lived, and died. There were a black-and-white television and a single overhead light bulb. In the drawer of a small end table were a deck of cards, some envelopes and a few nails.

"He joked about dying," said his other friend, Ron Tasker, 31, a miner who had left him on Saturday with a warm coal fire and a half gallon of whisky, two quarts of buttermilk and six coconut candy bars. "Before Thanksgiving or Christmas, he would say, 'I'll never see another turkey day,'" said Tasker, who believes he may have been related but isn't sure.

In fact, the old man had almost died a year ago when a house he had rented from Sharpless burned down. He had been rescued from the blaze in an alcoholic stupor. Considering his drinking, his friends said, it is a wonder he lived as long as he did.

He spent little on groceries and, said Sharpless, "if nobody fixed food for him, he wouldn't eat." Five feet, six inches tall, he weighed a mere hundred pounds when he

died. He lived without a telephone or indoor plumbing. Water came from a spring when someone brought it to him.

Mostly, he just drank. Even when he went to the hospital for cataracts, they gave him beer to get fluids into him.

He had grown up on a hundred-acre farm near here. There was no tractor, only horses and hand plows, and his schooling ended in fourth grade.

His steadiest employment — it lasted eight years, he told friends — was as a moonshiner for a notorious local distributor.

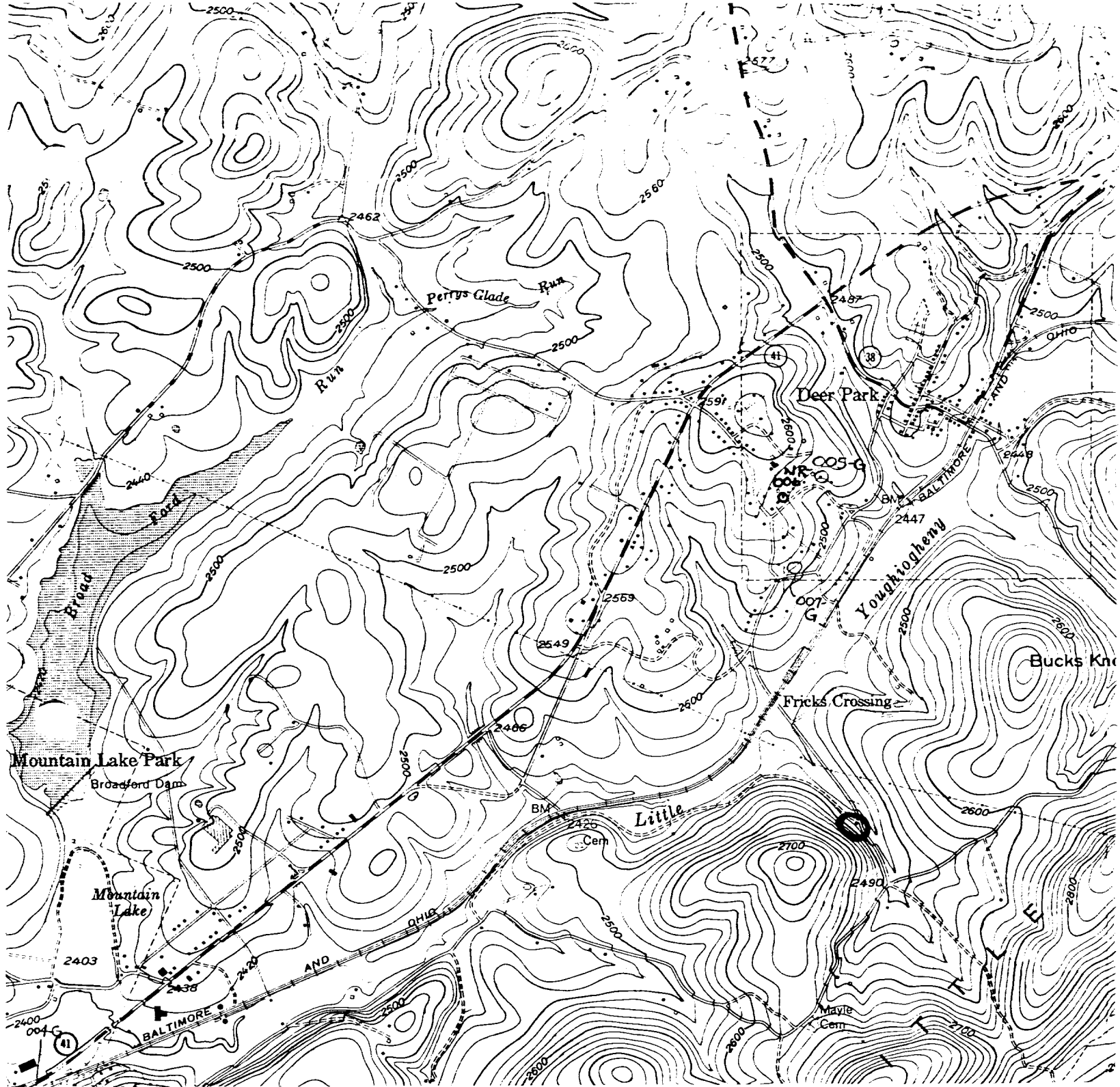
When Repeal put a crimp in moonshining, Austin Tasker joined the Army in 1933. He was stationed in Hawaii for a while, then left the service in 1937.

Back in Garrett County, he mined coal, married and divorced and remarried, to a woman 22 years his junior. She left him in 1956, taking the children with her. He never knew his six grandchildren.

Tasker worked for a time in a glass factory and also in a copper salvage yard, both in Pennsylvania. He lived, too, in Northeast Washington and was a carpenter's helper in Silver Spring and a construction worker in St. Mary's County in southern Maryland. In 1972, he returned to Garrett County, where he joined the ranks of the unemployed — nearly 20 percent here in wintertime — and then enjoyed a retirement of sorts, visited by his drinking buddies.

Because of severe weather and his own infirmities, Tasker had not been out of his house since the summer. Ron Tasker kept him supplied with coal. A few weeks ago, Ron Tasker installed an oil stove in Austin Tasker's kitchen and helped him apply for free fuel under the county's emergency assistance program for the needy.

On a small table a few feet from where he died this week was a letter saying his application had been accepted. It was dated Dec. 30. Delivery hadn't come in time.



Deer Park, MD
 USGS 7.5 minute series
 Scale - 1:24,000
 1948; photorevised 1974

Site #: G-IV-B-133

Location: Deer Park Hotel Rd., W. side,
 approx. .9 mi. S. of Deer Park
 Hotel complex
 Vicinity of Deer Park



G-IV-B-133

Austin Tasker House

Garrett Co., MD

Ann Burns 9/17/81

SW elev., ~~FAC~~-SE elev.